

in the news

INSIDE

Linda Ronstadt appeared in a spectacular concert at the Music Hall Monday night, coinciding with the release of her *Greatest Hits* album.

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The Hockey club continued its winning ways Saturday with an easy 6-2 victory over Gordon. Kevin Dopart '79 and Rich Bryant '79 combined for four goals in four minutes to ice the win.

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OUTSIDE

The General Assembly of the Undergraduate Association failed for the second time on Monday to obtain a quorum when only 27 delegates showed up for a meeting at which proposed amendments to the UA constitution were to be considered. Thirty delegates are needed for a quorum. The next GA meeting will be some time in January.

The Consumer Price Index rose 0.4 per cent in October before seasonal adjustment to 173.3 (1967=100), the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the US Department of Labor reported. The October CPI was up 5.3 per cent from a year ago.

Arthur R. Von Hippel, Institute Professor, emeritus, and professor of electrophysics, emeritus, has been honored by the Materials Research Society as the first recipient of an award recognizing outstanding contributions to the advancement of interdisciplinary materials research. The award has been named for Professor Von Hippel, a pioneer in such research.

Registration Material for the second term will be available in Lobby 10 on Monday, Dec. 13 and Tuesday, Dec. 14.

The MIT women's volleyball team's bid to reach the final double-elimination round of the National Championships in California was thwarted Wednesday night by Lewis and Clark College of Idaho, who edged the Tech squad, 17-19, 16-14, 12-15. MIT, which then succumbed to top-seeded Texas Lutheran 3-15, 7-15, faced Kearney State of Nebraska last night to complete the first-round pool competition. Complete details will appear in next Tuesday's issue.

UA housing proposals reviewed

By Kent Pitman

Overcrowding and improvement of the MIT housing system were the chief topics of discussion at a New House forum Monday night.

The forum, moderated by Undergraduate Association President Phil Moore '77, was the first in a series of meetings planned by the UA with each of the dormitories on campus to review four proposals which were outlined at a meeting of the UA. The following proposals have been made:

- In order to avoid drastic overcrowding, the class size should be

held constant unless new living facilities are added to the housing system.

- Responsibility for determining the rules and arrangements for coed and single-sex living groups should be shared officially by the students and the Office of the Dean for Students Affairs.

- Living groups should be given more complete control over the uses of internal facilities and the placement of objects in or near each living group.

- The process of dormitory rate review should be opened up to greater student input, and the

housing budget should be disclosed to the public and subject to negotiation and student input where possible.

Coed Situation

Students attending the meeting were dissatisfied with the distribution of women on campus, but they felt that it was probably the best arrangement which could be devised while the female population in the undergraduate class remains at its current level. The solution, they agreed, would have to come gradually as more female students entered the Institute.

Overcrowding

Overcrowding exists because there is a "budget crisis," said Moore. "The chief issue is whether you need overcrowding to get away with the budget."

Moore added that in his opinion, the Institute would not have to raise tuition costs in order to lessen overcrowding, but that "if they thought they didn't have to [hold down tuition], they'd raise it anyway.... The question is whether people are going to be

able to afford to keep coming here."

One resident commented that students are probably reluctant to seek off-campus residence because they are afraid that they may not be able to return to their previous housing status if off-campus living does not work out.

Moore said that he would look into the possibility of guaranteeing housing to a student who has lived off campus for one term and decided that he does not wish to stay.

Sculptures

The placement of sculptures in or around dormitories was also discussed. Some students seemed encouraged by recent meetings with the Committee on Visual Arts, but others indicated doubt that their opinions were being considered seriously by the CVA.

The majority of those present favored the purchase of a greater variety of art forms, rather than the current policy of obtaining only modern sculptures. Paintings, tapestries, and murals were among the alternatives which were mentioned.

Future seems bright for solar energy use

By Mitchell Trachtenberg

The Earthbound use of solar power generated in space has a "commercial potential in the trillions of dollars," asserted John Disher, NASA's Director of Advanced Programs, at a seminar on near-Earth space utilization held here Wednesday.

Disher stated that "eventually, I am sure that we are going to be using solar energy from space here on Earth." Projects aimed at exploiting the unlimited solar power of space are still in the study stage, however.

The most definite short range development of space potential that Disher predicts is a continued enlargement of the communications satellite industry. The industry is already worth several hundred million dollars per year, and Disher says "communications satellites are going to be a billion dollar a year business in not too long." He also believes that the United States is going to maintain its current position in the industry, with half of the market.

Disher cited five "unique attributes" of space which he feels make it a good environment for industrial development: the "overview" which it provides, allowing large areas of the planet's surface to be observed by one camera; a near zero gravity environment; an "unlimited reservoir for both waste heat and waste products; the perpetual motion characteristics of orbit; and, most important, unlimited solar energy.

According to Disher, the "overview" aspect of space, which made possible the great success of communications satellites, will allow us to monitor large sections of the globe for such varied purposes as pollution control, agricultural development, national defense, and even to assist the shipping industry (by observing which Arctic waterways are clogged by ice at any particular time).

It is the near zero gravity of space that will enable us to collect huge quantities of solar power, claims Disher. Thanks to the zero gravity, structures can be constructed so lightly that concepts too huge to be feasible on Earth become practical in orbit. For example, the transmitting antenna alone, in one design under study by NASA for a solar power station, would be composed of almost 3000 20-meter cubes,

forming an array with a radius of one kilometer.

Other long range plans described by Disher include electronic mail transfer via space satellites, use of space as a reservoir for Earth's waste products, and exploitation of high vacuum conditions for the creation of superpure alloys.

Disher states that, surprisingly, zero gravity actually helps workers to perform intricate manipulations, so that problems with worker performance should not occur.

Closer at hand, according to Disher, are plans for the development of a space "tug" (Orbiting Transfer Vehicle in NASA-ese) and a six-man space station by 1985; the development of a new large lift vehicle for the late 1980's; and the operation of a full-fledged "space base" housing 100 people by 1995.

NASA's hope is that with each new development, construction of further projects will become easier. The space shuttle, expected to make its first flight very shortly, will be the start of the upward climb.

What we need to do now, says Disher, is "learn to crawl so that we will be ready to fly when the time comes."

Despite distribution credit cuts

Writing program alive and well

By Thomas J. Spisak

The MIT Writing Program, whose demise was feared by students and faculty last term, is flourishing today despite the loss of distribution credit for its major introductory course, "Writing and Experience."

After the most extensive evaluation of an academic program in recent history, the Committee to Evaluate the Pilot Writing Program, chaired by Professor Nathan Sivin, applauded the Program's methods and philosophy of teaching while recommending only minor administrative changes to bring it more in line with Institute practice.

The Committee found that a program "committed to the exploration of individual consciousness and value, not merely to the teaching of technical methods, can have a perceptible impact on undergraduate education at MIT." The Committee also cheered the Writing Pro-

gram's emphasis on Institute-wide programs.

Members of the Writing Program have published three volumes this month and a fourth is expected in early 1977. *Free Writing! a group approach*, the Program's "textbook," was released this week by Hayden Book Co., for distribution to writing courses at other schools.

Professor Patricia Cumming and Robin Becker have published individual works released this month by Cambridge's Alice James Books. Cumming's *Letters from an Outlying Province* has met with almost universal praise; Becker co-authored *Personal Effects* with two other poets, Helena Minton of Northeastern and Marilyn Zuckerman. Ken Skier, an instructor and original member of the Program, expects his *Writing Process Handbook* to be published by Prentice-Hall early next year.

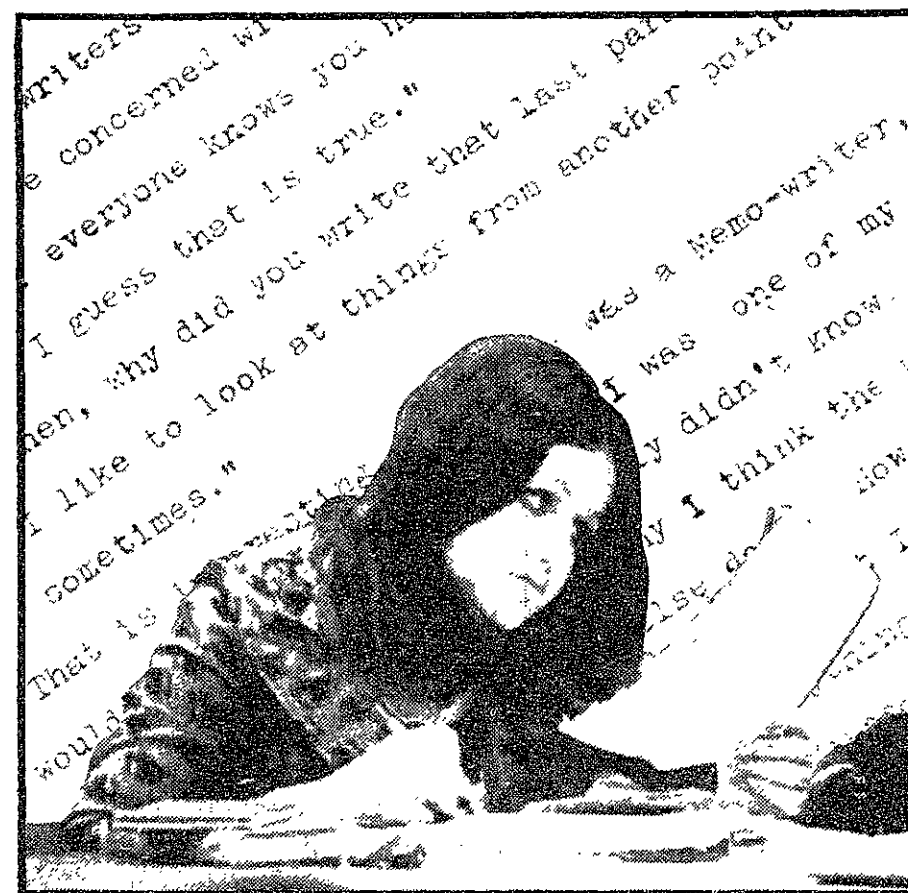
May Join Consortium

The Writing Program has been invited to join a consortium of writing programs at the Ivy League schools and Stanford designed to share information and resources about methods of teaching college-level writing.

Members of the MIT program are also reported to be meeting with colleagues from Harvard and Cornell to this week to discuss the structure of a possible mini-consortium to share resources among the three schools.

According to Ken Skier, this week's discussions are "still preliminary but indicate the interest with which our methods are viewed outside MIT."

"We hope that by working together with Harvard and Cornell we can test new methods of teaching writing, explore funding possibilities, and disseminate the results of our research to a national audience."



Ronstadt incredible

By Rebecca Waring

It is a rare thing when a popular vocalist performs as well in concert as on an album, but Linda Ronstadt managed to outdo herself Monday evening at the Music Hall.

The first 45 minutes of the concert featured Andrew Gold and Ronstadt's backup band playing some solid, but unspectacular folk-rock. Unlike many concerts, though, the warm-up band played long enough to achieve its purpose, without making the audience impatient. What *did* make the sell-out crowd squirm in their seats was the length of the intermission — nearly 25 minutes.

Ronstadt was worth waiting for; when she finally appeared she performed a marathon twenty numbers. Some of the best moments came when she sang "Tracks of My Tears" from *Prisoner In Disguise*, and "When Will I Be Loved" and "You're No Good" from *Heart Like a Wheel*.

The crowd gave Ronstadt two standing ovations, and she performed three encores. Her final two numbers carried the audience

away. First she sang "Desperado," by the Eagles, an extremely beautiful song to which she added a tremendous emotion. Finally she gave a jubilant rendering of the Rolling Stones' "Tumbling Dice." It is incredible what a difference a great voice can make to already great music; the combination of "Desperado" and "Tumbling Dice" was almost sublime.

About ten of the twenty songs Ronstadt performed are on her just-released *Greatest Hits* album (on Asylum), which has to be one of the best Christmas hit packages around. The album also includes a couple of older cuts which she didn't perform in concert, but of equal stature, especially *A Different Drum* written by Mike Nesmith (remember the Monkees?).

Ronstadt was backed up by Andrew Gold and Kenny Edwards on guitar and Michael Botts on drums. They have teamed up with Ronstadt for many of her album cuts, and were outstanding. Overall, this was the best concert I have seen in a long time.



Tom Klimowicz

Linda Ronstadt entertains an enthusiastic sell-out crowd Monday night at the Music Hall.

Man Plus not up to par

By Drew Blakeman

Take the premise of television's *Six Million Dollar Man*, carry the bionics a step or two farther, and you have *Man Plus*, the latest novel by Frederik Pohl.

The situation is interesting. Astronaut Roger Torraway's body is completely rebuilt, an agonizing step at a time, with artificial parts so that he can stay alive on Mars without any external aids.

Unfortunately, Pohl leaves much of the plot up in the air. *Man Plus* has the appearance of a book that was written on a week's vacation at the beach. More should be expected from Pohl, who has been awarded the Hugo (science fiction's most prestigious award) four times.

Torraway's wife, who was greatly in-

volved with the project at the beginning, simply vanishes as the story progresses. There are holes in the plot big enough to fly a starship through, which the reader can only try to fill. There are also several confusing interludes where a group of "intelligent" computers acts as a Greek Chorus, the purpose of which can only be guessed at.

Man Plus could probably be relegated to the back shelf with relative ease — even great writers fall flat once in a while. The only reason to read this book would be to look into the premise of such a "super-bionic" man, but there is already a good deal of literature on the market which treats this subject. *Man Plus* is not one of the better examples.

Star Trek trivia terrific

By Drew Blakeman

Have you ever wondered what a Gorn is? Do you know the name of Captain Kirk's nephew? Do you care what Spock's serial number is? Well, the *Star Trek Concordance* by Bjo Trimble can answer these questions and a myriad of others about everybody's favorite science fiction series, *Star Trek*.

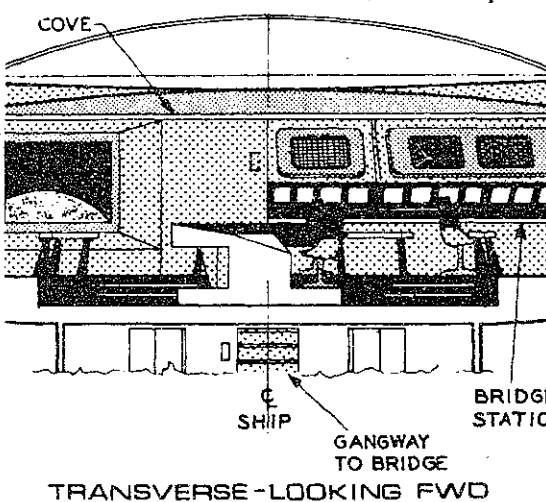
Bjo (pronounced "bee-joe") Trimble has been compiling this concordance since the series was first aired in 1966, and it is prob-

ably the most complete collection of *Star Trek* trivia in existence. It is certainly the only one that can be purchased (\$6.95 in Ballantine paperbacks).

She not only spent ten years of research gleaming every bit of information from the show that she could, but she also painstakingly cross-indexed it extensively. Under each heading there are as many as fifty additional references.

The *Star Trek Concordance* contains trivia from the original 78 *Star Trek* episodes, as is to be expected, and it also includes information from the short-lived animated version. Many people thought that the cartoon show was far inferior to the original and completely discredited it, so that this is one of the few books which deals with the animated show at all.

"Trekkies" will find the *Star Trek Concordance* fascinating as a storehouse of trivia in addition to the many illustrations, but it probably will not interest too many others. The concordance should whet people's appetites for Paramount's full length *Star Trek* movie, which begins production in late March.



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Police Blotter

(The Police Blotter is a report written by the Campus Patrol on crimes, incidents, and actions on the MIT campus each week.)

Hitchhiker Robbed

A young woman hitchhiking alone on Mass. Ave. outside MIT not long ago was robbed at knife point after being picked up by a man driving a light green car, thought to be a Karman-Ghia. After picking her up, the man drove into the Ashdown House parking area, pulled a knife and demanded her money. He then searched her himself, and pulled a necklace from her neck. Ordering her out of the car, he then fled the scene. The suspect is described as: 28 to 30 years old, tall, slender, light brown hair, with a moustache.

Auto Theft Fails

Officers on patrol in the Westgate area Saturday night broke up the attempt to steal a green Pontiac parked there. The attempt was carried out by three youths; while two stand in the shadows of Vassar Street buildings watching for the police, the third works on the target vehicle itself. Warned

of the approach of the Officers by the lookouts, the one working on the car raced across Vassar Street, joined his partners, and the trio fled into the darkness toward the railroad tracks.

Valuables Stolen

Two men, age 16 to 18, one of whom was wearing a tan coat, were spotted by an alert Westgate resident Sunday morning around 7:30 ransacking autos parked in the Westgate parking lot. They fled the scene in a blue sedan, heading westerly on Memorial Drive. From one was taken an 8mm movie projector and a pair of ski boots; while from another an AM/FM radio was stolen. The total loss value exceeded \$500.

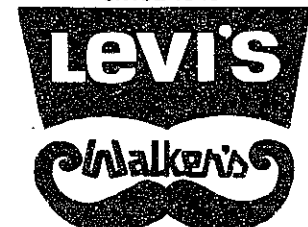
A 35mm Nikon camera, valued at some \$700, was stolen from a photography lab on the second floor of an East Campus area building when left unattended for just a few moments on Wednesday. Investigators are seeking a slim young man around 19 years

of age who was seen lurking in the area just prior to the theft.

Community Notice

Students who plan to be away for the upcoming holiday and IAP periods who lack adequate storage facilities for safeguarding valuable personal property (except bicycles) may leave such items at the Campus Police Headquarters (W31-215) for safekeeping. Goods should be boxed or packaged wherever possible. Deposit and pickup period is 9am to 5pm Monday through Friday.

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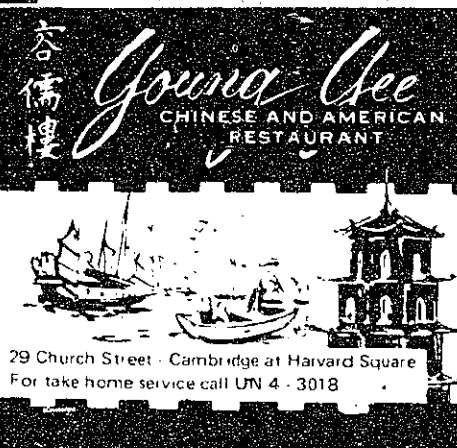
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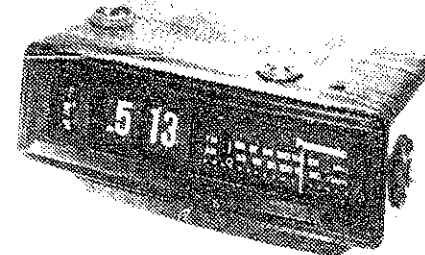
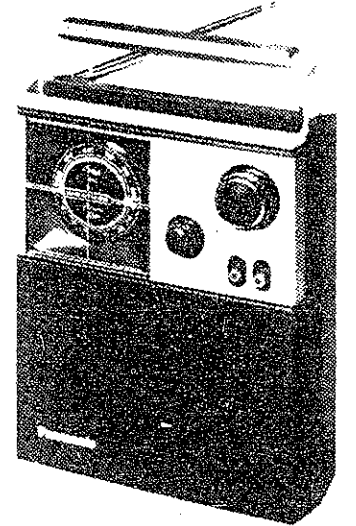
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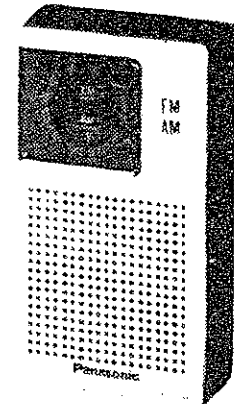
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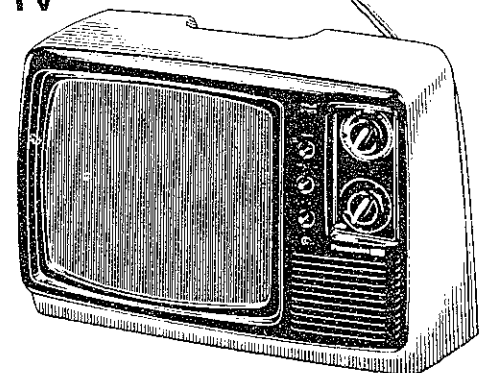
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No Folk Dance input

To the Editor:

On Sunday November 7, the MIT Folk Dance Club collected money for the United Way via general contributions and by auctioning off dances. The legitimacy of the selling of dances and the decision process has aroused controversy among the members. This incident is just a symptom of a more serious problem.

Dances are normally requested on a blackboard and selected by the programmer or night director. The auctioning process was criticized because of the subjugation of people's desires to those with money. The general donations were not criticized because they were free will. The price structure was arbitrary (\$1, 1.50, 2) depending upon the subjective assessment of the dance's "commonness" by the programmer.

The decision to sell dances was the result of an indecisive if not negative straw poll and "survey." The survey was typical of past administration's surveys — a casual asking of their friends and acquaintances. It has been sug-

gested to formalize the surveying process to eliminate its arbitrariness, but this has been ignored as well as requests for representation in club policy and club decisions.

The problem of administration's responsiveness and the club's policies is manifested in this issue. Since remedy would not come from within (it has been tried), the only solution is to have an outside body investigate, unless the administration bows to general public sentiment. The proposed solution is to have the ASA investigate: club policy (in terms of discrimination to MIT students e.g. scheduling events when MIT students are away; level of difficulty of dances discouraging potential MIT beginners); constitutionality of club's actions (how decisions are made, representation); elections (ASA should supervise the upcoming election). The poor decisions of the past would then be prevented by a representative administration.

Name withheld by request
November 17, 1976

Lecture aisle seat takers inconsiderate of others

To the Editor:

I am writing to briefly lambast a group of inconsiderate people here at the Institute. I am referring to those people who take aisle seats in lecture halls before the row is filled. I have seen nerds come to a lecture five minutes early, grab seats on the edge of empty rows, and then grumble as people climb over them to get to the empty seats. Everything

would be made much easier if these people would open their eyes to the inconveniences they are perpetrating on the general Tech population and try to sit towards the middle of a row when possible. Chances are the view is no worse than, and possibly even better than that from the edge. All I ask for is a little consideration.

Scott Holmes '79
November 18, 1976

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Commentary

Avant-garde tastemakers

By Roger Kolb

What with all this talk about avant-garde art, it's about time somebody kicked over a rock and pointed a flashlight at its devotees. Who are today's avant-gardists and what does each of them get

Another earthly reward devolves upon the less ethically-inclined critic: money. A critic will go into ecstasies over an artist. The latter's prices, as a result, go up. His paintings (sculptures) start to sell. Grateful, the artist

bargain with a dealer and give his first exhibition. The glorious day arrives. Critics show up. If pleased, they may praise the newcomer's works for their "shards of interpenetrated sensibility," "thick fuliginous paint," and "mannerist juxtapositions of the oniric and cryptic personage" (these are authentic quotes). The artist's prices are jacked up. An impressive exhibit catalog is issued by the dealer.

"There's only one measure of success in running a gallery: making money..."

out of being ahead of the times?

A. The Tastemakers — Critics And Dealers

Almost all of the famous painters and sculptors to come along since World War II were put over by a small band of New York critics and dealers. This august body of outspoken tastemakers may not number as many as forty people. Each campaign on behalf of a particular artist usually nessed a critic or critics declaiming with such vehement certitude, such unshakable authority, as to make the existence of equally valid conflicting viewpoints seem impossible. An intolerant tone is essential if the critic is to achieve oracular status among those anxious to be told what's what.

For certain critics, then, the avant-garde scene offers each the thrill of claiming to be the first person sensitive, intelligent and far-sighted enough to discover the singular talents of Genius So-and-So. It also confers the despotic joy of seeing thousands of culture-hungry intellectuals walking around dutifully repeating his opinions.

rewards the critic with one of his works. The critic then turns around and peddles the item at the inflated price. It is a fairly common practice.

The dealer, unlike the critic, is just in it for the money. Many of today's gallery operators are art ignoramuses who gave up businesses as used-car salesmen, tie manufacturers, etc. after being lured away by the prospect of huge profits. One of the most influential of them, Marlborough's Frank Lloyd, is quoted as saying: "There's only one measure of success in running a gallery: making money. Any dealer who says it's not is a hypocrite or will soon be closing his doors."

The artist, to make a name for himself nowadays, must give a one-man or -woman show in New York City. The dealer, to turn his gallery over to a newcomer, must first have proof that the latter has been praised by an established artist or critic. (There is today said to be a scramble on among art hopefuls for units in apartment buildings housing successful figures in their field.) Having been praised, the artist is ready to

B. College Professors

Some critics, e.g. the University of Chicago's Harold Rosenberg, are also college professors. As such, they can be extremely influential. Generally speaking, however, academicians are little more than conduits for views handed down by the oracular New York critics.

In that respect, art history professors differ significantly from their counterparts in music. Reputations in that art form are today established by in-fighting in academic journals and textbooks.

C. Patrons

Nowadays the vast majority of modern art works are purchased by mercenary art investors out to make a killing. These speculators, often totally ignorant about art, will buy a painting or sculpture without so much as first looking at it. The name of the artist is the only thing that matters to them. Recent years have witnessed the formation of art investment corporations. One of these, Modarco (Modern Art Corporation), purchases avant-garde art and stores it in underground vaults in Switzerland. A lump (Please turn to page 5)

feedback

The real 'dubious quality'

To the Editor:

I resent the statement in the article concerning eating at MIT (The Tech, Nov. 12) that McDonald's is a restaurant of "dubious quality." McDonald's quality control measures are the most stringent in the industry!

The content of the food is unquestionable. The meat is 100 per cent beef. The buns have to meet rigid standards for size and for flour content. The potatoes used for the french fries have to pass specific gravity and carbo-

hydrate tests. McDonald's has to have the best quality; it wouldn't be the largest fast-food chain in the world if it didn't.

Granted, McDonald's might not offer the finest fare, but it is not designed to. McDonald's purpose is to offer good food at a reasonable price in a clean and pleasant atmosphere — and it achieves this.

I worked for two years at McDonald's restaurants both in Colorado and in Massachusetts, one semester at Lobdell, and one semester at Twenty Chimneys.

Believe me, two of these three establishments are of dubious quality, and McDonald's is not one of them.

Martin Friedle '79
Member, 1976 McDonalds All-American Team

The Tech always welcomes Letters to the Editor. Preference for publication is given to triple-spaced, typed letters. Submissions should be made to: Letters to the Editor, The Tech, W20-483.

opinion cont.

Who are the avant-gardists of today?

(Continued from page 4)

sum is occasionally doled out to a rising young artist to produce works that are immediately whisked away to the vaults. More art is believed to be hidden away in Switzerland than in all the museums in France.

(Modarco has a big heart. If a dealer wants to secure a canvas for his exhibition of an artist's work, the corporation will buy it

for him. The exhibition enhanced in this way, the artist's prices will rise that much more. That, in turn, will increase the market value of Modarco's holdings in that artist.)

Art patroness Peggy Guggenheim has observed that no one buys paintings and sculptures new and old anymore for the love of art. Of the items that are not purchased as investments, many are

bought for egoistical reasons. They are sold to the wealthy businessman who feels that he has something to prove to society. He is seeking to show that the popular image of the businessman as a coarse, avaricious Robber Baron indifferent to humanistic values does not apply to him. He views purchasing art as a possible means of summoning public good will towards himself for its demonstration of beauty worship.

The most desirable merchandise of all is avant-grade art. Buying modern is the tycoon's way of combating his conservative image. It is his way of saying, "Look! I, too, am a radical; I, too, am sympathetic to change." It is his way of donning the Catinarian robes of a tribune of the people.

This must be borne in mind by the reader the next time he starts wondering why MIT doesn't

review its sculpture program in light of all of the opposition it has aroused. The MIT arts program gathered steam during the War in Vietnam. It was then, it will be recalled, that corporate heads and defense-oriented research scientists were now said to be unfeeling, inhuman monsters of depravity, merchants of death, fascist pigs, etc.

A coincidence, you say? (Please turn to page 6)

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feedback

Machine beauty

To the Editor:

To those of us who habitually sit in the back of classrooms and doodle, the war raging in the letter columns of *The Tech* over the campus works of art is both fruitless and humorous: the more fruitless and heated the argument, the more amusing it becomes. For the entire discussion has taken place in what is essentially a factual vacuum, without any mention of the works themselves.

Student x will write in to say that he doesn't like them, they are hunks of metal, and ugly at that. Student y indignantly replies, "They are not ugly. Just look at them. Besides, they are done by the famous modern sculptors, p, q, and r." Each side is guilty here, Student y perhaps more so, for such an issue is not to be decided by the wave and flourish of a name.

The only way to break the deadlock is by specific discussion. Thus a better, though still not ideal, reaction from Student x might be this: "I don't like *Transparent Horizons*. It reminds me of a turd I saw on my Uncle Hubert's lawn at age 5." Such an observation brings us immediately into the realm of real experience. It is discussable. Student y may now bring specific observations about the sculpture, about its formation and the aesthetic relation of the parts, to bear. He may, using his knowledge of the work, show that Student x's association is purely random and not warranted by the physical structure of the work itself. He may bring his own associations forward, and show how the work tends to excite just such associations. He may say, for example, that he likes the *Great Sail* because its curves give him a feeling of freedom and movement, and then point to the particular lines that he thinks graceful. To which Student x may reply that he'll take his sails on boats, thank you, and not in metal: if the scul-

tor wished to convey a feeling of freedom, he should have made a durable kite and floated it over MIT — not landed a kind of meteor in the middle of it. And so on. Discussion may now continue: the deadlock has been broken. (I myself like the thing.)

The stumbling block to the appreciation of much modern sculpture lies in this: that it has taken its standard of beauty not from natural objects or the physique of man, but rather has tried to assert and convey the peculiar beauty of the machine. This beauty lies essentially in sleekness — in the careful tailoring of form to fit function, as in a sail. The problem is that such a beauty, though at times powerful, is strange to us and not very accessible to ordinary human emotions. Very few of the sculptures based in this way are pretty, though some may be said to be beautiful. So one may rightfully doubt the argument of those who say that the skepticism of those who don't like the sculptures is just a product of a lack of open-mindedness, and that in fifty years it will all be accepted. Rather, the harsh standard of beauty of many of these sculptures may never find a large audience — just as the middle and late works of Schoenberg have never found such an audience after the passage of many years, though the Romantics (and jazz) are popular with all. Accordingly, one need not be against the sculptures to say that perhaps the more unpopular of them shouldn't be erected in places where they must be continually viewed by what is essentially a captive audience. (This is not to mention the enjoyable and cynical suspicion, held by probably half the MIT community, that *Transparent Horizons* is not "inaccessible" at all, but just an outright fraud perpetrated for the love of money, and better looking with the paint left on it than without it.)

David Lebeaux

Art: refuting naive believers

To the Editor:

Steven Shladover's feeble attack (*The Tech*, Dec. 3) on those of us who think critically about MIT's sculpture program is just the sort of thing to be expected from the naive true believer, the gushy gaga incense burner at the holy shrine of modern art. Among other things, he says that we who are not spiritually intoxicated by the Nevelson and Moore peices should hold our tongues mindful of a time gap for the appreciation of the new. To exemplify the magical transmutations wrought by time, he cites the case of the *Great Sail*, which, though widely booed when installed in the mid '60's, is today regarded as a "classic" (the word is his). Scorn for *Transparent Horizons* and *Reclining Figure* is to be attributed to close-minded philistines who predictably vilify the new whenever it is "beyond their comprehension." By so doing they join the ranks of history's "prosaic minds" who to their eternal disgrace disparaged the "classics," the "masterpieces of their own times."

These observations contain so many appalling blunders on hardly knows where to begin rectifying them. Most obvious is the picture of students (and everyone, for that matter) sheepishly walking around holding their tongues fearful of seeing their sincere opinions stultified by The Verdict Of History. (Should fans of the new sculptures fall silent in the knowledge that those items may one day be adjudged bad? Mr. Shladover doesn't say.) There's no such thing as The Verdict Of History. It doesn't exist.

Never has. Never will. The reason why it doesn't, hasn't and won't is because a work of art isn't good or bad as a matter of scientific fact. Good and bad in art is largely a matter of taste. Truth and taste are two different things. It is through the free and sincere expression of opinion that society gains some sense of the overall social value of an art work. Not through deference to a presumed Verdict Of History. Not by sniveling submission to The Experts.

As for Mr. Shladover's assessment of criticism sustained by past art works, it should be observed that 99% of it was directed at items that, at the risk of understatement, are not hailed as masterpieces today. Further, it should be pointed out that for every artist that is commonly believed to have been underpraised in his time, there were probably a hundred that were overpraised. Henry Moore and Louise Nevelson, in this writer's opinion, are two of them.

Never should an individual feel guilty about his opinion of a work of art. One's level of artistic sophistication is determined not by the art works he likes and dislikes, but by the wisdom or poverty of his opinions about them.

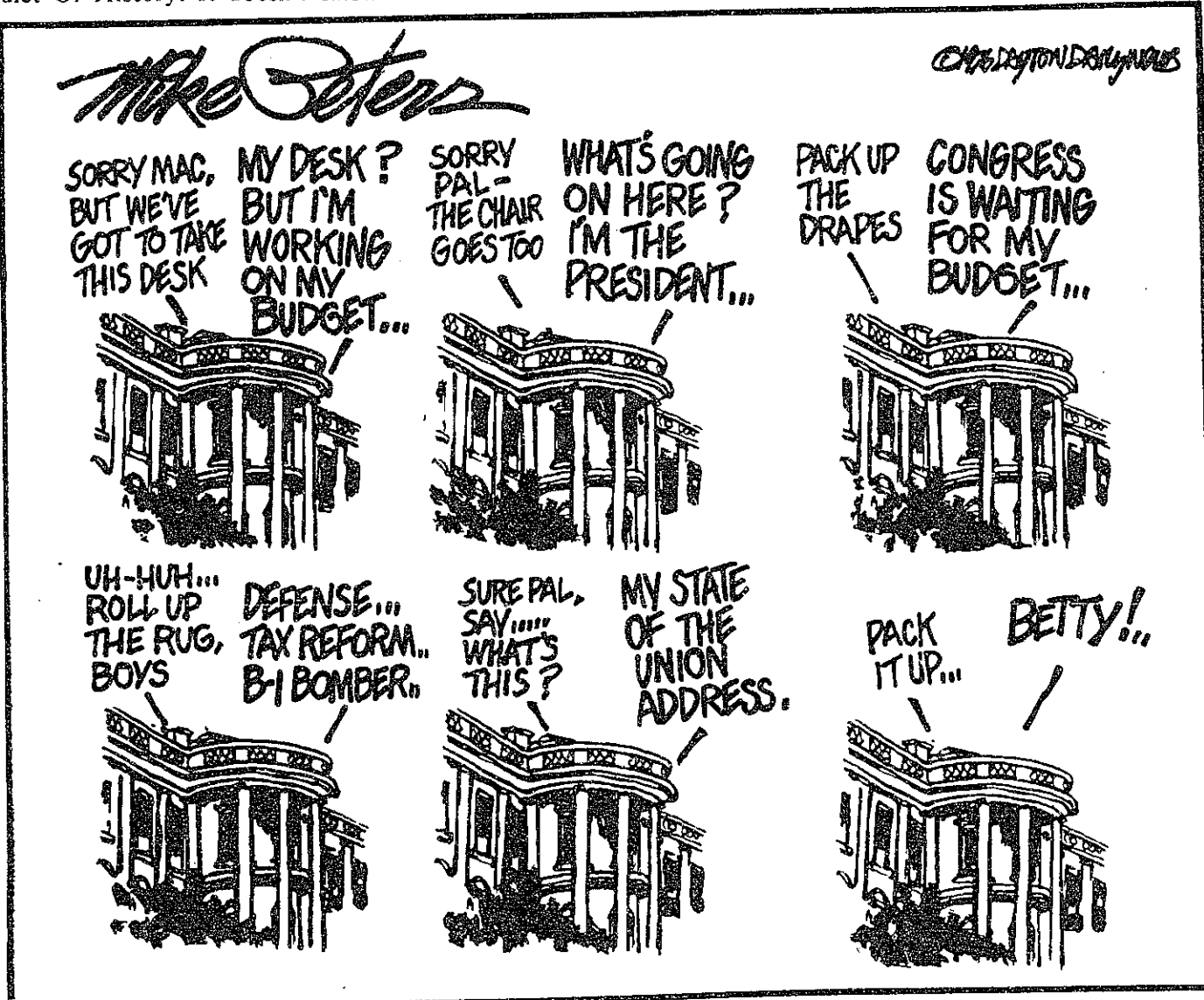
This brings us to Mr. Shladover's point that Tech sculpture naysayers go thumbs down because *Transparent Horizons et al* are "beyond their comprehension." The message here is that the enjoyment of art works signifies that one has understood them. Not to enjoy them means that one has not understood them. So says MIT graduate student Steven E. Shladover.

Nonsense! Some of the most informative art criticism of revered works has been produced by writers who disliked them. Conversely, some of the most vacuous has been the vehicle of partisan sentiment. One can learn all there is to know about an art work — study its style, read about its creator, analyze the piece itself — and still hate it.

Just as it is wrong to jump to the conclusion that the foe of an art work does not comprehend it, it is similarly unwise to assume that its supporters necessarily understand it. For that matter, there doesn't seem to be any reason to conclude that those who applaud an item are sincere. Many people, including intellectuals, are — let's whisper it — creatures of fashion.

Mr. Shladover believing that those who blast *Transparent Horizons* and *Reclining Figure* do not understand them, it is almost certain that he feels that those who like them understand them. Because ignorance, contrary to that adage involving bliss, is always deplorable, this writer will conclude with a proposal. He suggests that our indignant modernist educaite the benighted multitude. He proposes that Mr. Shladover use this page to explain to us ignoramuses exactly why either TH or RF should be considered an outstanding work of art. What is it that we sculpture skeptics don't understand about it? Mr. Shladover, come forward. Enlighten us ignoble philistines, disperse the clouds and save us all from making fools out of ourselves in the eyes of all eternity.

Roger Kolb



opinion cont.

Lay avant-gardists: art snobs?

(Continued from page 5)

Perhaps so.

D. Laymen

Avant-garde art fans are mostly bright, reasonably well-educated young adults from the upper- and middle-classes. Many are Sunday painters themselves. The overriding emotion behind their attraction to avant-garde art, they claim, is aesthetic interest. That's what they *claim*. And, in some cases, undoubtedly, it is. However, in the majority of instances, this writer will guess, the dominant feeling is a strong desire to elevate oneself above the common run of mankind by identifying with a symbol of High Culture. Snobbism, in other words. The avant-garde art fan is

beset to an unusual degree with an emotion that all of us feel from time to time: the desire to dissociate oneself from, and act superior to, the majority culture — the culture that is symbolized in everyday conversation nowadays by Lawrence Welk, *Reader's Digest*, Billy Graham, *People* magazine, TV dinners, and Sunday afternoon football watching with beer can in hand.

Here it should be pointed out that modern art became the object of snobbism at the point in history when people started to believe that a particular art work was better than another by virtue of its (the former's) later date. If citizen A liked new art better than old, while B preferred the old to the new, it followed that A had

better taste than B. As strange as that situation was, the contemporary situation is stranger still. Almost everyone believes the visual arts and music to be in a precipitous state of decline. Yet, snobbism continues to attach itself to the *moderne*.

Art snobbism, as a result, isn't what it used to be. A distinct combination of pointlessness and aimlessness pervades the modern variety of which earlier types were innocent. Avant-gardists nowadays delight not so much in this artist or that, but with the traditional prestige, the *cachet*, that attends to belonging to the modern scene. Almost all of them act as though people who dislike avant-garde art are automatically hide-bound, conservative and intellectually inferior. Almost all of them have no personal preference as to the future direction of art. Most are perfectly content to be told by the authoritative-sounding taste arbiters who the truly important artists are. Many are afraid that whatever sincere opinions they might wish to express will be rendered foolish by that cultural bogey man, The Test

Of Time. Many are attracted to the notion that by simply acting acquiescent towards modern art they are proven to be broad-minded and in touch with the times.

And so, when critics write about those "shards of impenetrated sensibility," the avant-gardist sees them. He sees those shards. And when Sir Oracle tells him about those "mannerist juxtapositions of the oneiric personage," he sees *them* too. He is a latter-day Polonius who sees "shards" in a manner reminiscent of Ophelia's perception of Hamlet's whale.

(This is the third article in a series. Next: Artists caught in the avant-garde vortex.)

feedback

Sci-fi future predictions: a storytelling side effect

To the Editor:

In the 12 Nov 76 issue of *The Tech*, David Koretz, in his article on Dr. Asimov's recent lecture at MIT, summed up the lecture in a quite erroneous manner, stating that "Asimov... attempted to demonstrate the ability of this century's science fiction writers to predict the future." He then went on to list the examples given by Asimov to defend his position.

What Mr. Koretz overlooked, however, was that Dr. Asimov gave these examples not to show that science fiction predicts reality, but rather to scoff at those who objected to science fiction on the grounds that it was "escape literature." He maintained that prediction was only a side effect of science fiction. To quote him from his book *Today and Tomorrow* and... "It is not really the business of science fiction writers to predict the future... The fact is that the science fiction writer's first aim is to tell an interesting and exciting story that will amuse the reader. His own particular type of story involves events and

attitudes that are not common, and perhaps are not even possible, in his own society, and therefore his tale has the value of novelty. If he is a conscientious science fiction writer, he will try to build up his unusual events and attitudes in a way that will make them seem plausible to the reader....

Later in the same book he says, "Some predictions are forced by the exigencies of plotting and no one is more surprised than the science fiction writer when it turns out that he has hold of something.... And when our ideas will only work if we make use of the scientifically impossible that, as far as we know, can never come true — such as time travel and anti-gravity — why, believe me, we do that, too, and without the tiniest compunction or remorse, provided only that we make it sound plausible."

Allen K. Wells '80
November 13, 1976

Psychiatric

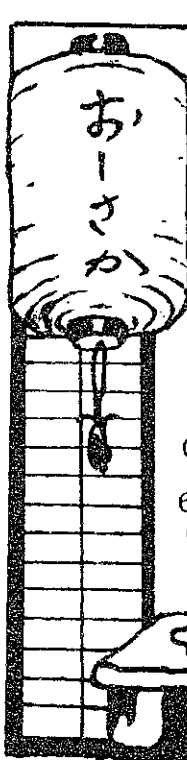
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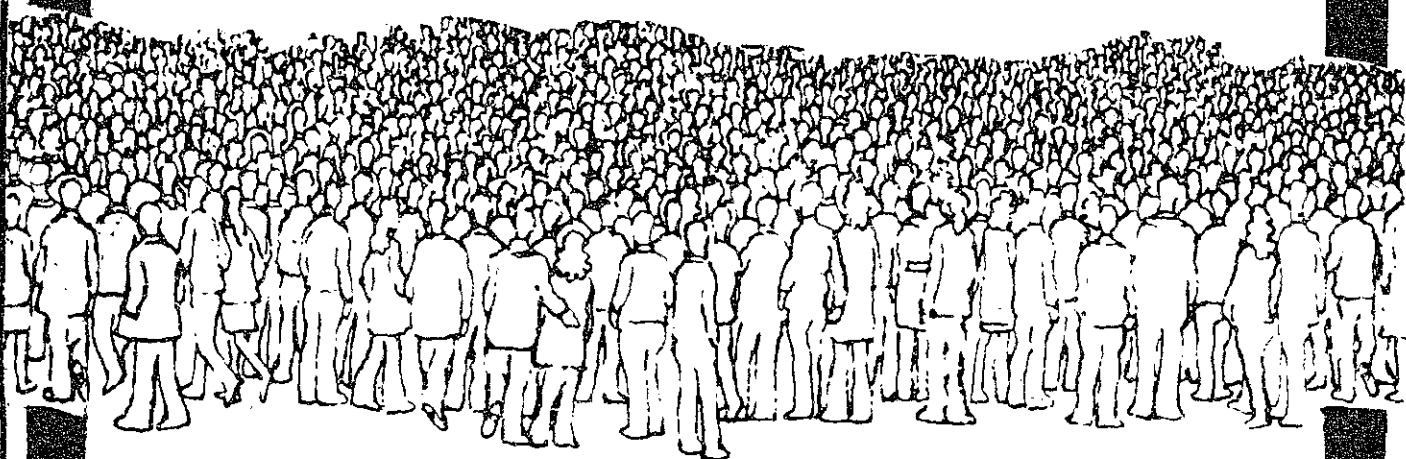
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sports cont.

W fencers edge Baruch

By Jeannette Wing
(Jeannette Wing is a member of the Women's Fencing Team.)

On December 3, the MIT Women's Fencing Team (2-3) beat Baruch College on indicators, winning by 10 touches.

Unaccustomed to the quick New York tempo, MIT fell behind to Baruch and by the tenth bout MIT was down 3-7. Undaunted, the women started fencing more aggressively to win the last five out of the 6 remaining bouts to even the score at 8-8. With the score tied, the meet was decided using the total numbers of touches received by each team, and MIT won 53-63.

Co-captain Judy Austin '77 led the team with three solid victories. Co-captain Meredith Boice '78 beat two of her opponents; Jeannette Wing '78, one. Michelle Prettyman '79 contributed two wins, the second of which was the key victory of the meet.

The next afternoon on December 4, the MIT women fenced a tougher team at Brooklyn College. Although the

quality of the fencing improved from the night before, the aggressiveness of their opponents shook MIT into dropping the meet with a final bout score of 7-9. However, Austin fenced well, winning all four of her bouts. Boice, Wing, and Prettyman each contributed one victory.

Earlier in the season, the MIT women beat Rhode Island College 7-2, and lost to both University of Maine (Orono) 6-10, and Radcliffe 6-10. Hopefully, when the season resumes in January the women will regain the momen-

tum they had during last year's 10-3 season.

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SCIENCE NEWS

flash!!! #9

PHYSICS TODAY

and the future advancement of the scientific American depends on a sharp delineation between math and science. In order to use relativistic math the student must learn a postulate that does not agree with the facts. Even worse this postulate involves a basic physical constant (c) for the velocity of light. It gets even worse, c is also used for the speed that all forces at a distance travel which include magnetic, electromagnetic, gravitational and electrostatic forces, not just light.

Einstein did not claim the mass of Mercury increases at perihelion. He said it appears to just as with time and size changes. Mercury's perihelion advances because even though Mercury is closest to the sun at perihelion it travels fastest in it's elliptical orbit and there is simply less time for this greater force to act or do the job we expect.

Physics is supposed to be intimately concerned with motion but unfortunately Galileo had to roll steel balls down inclined planes because of the time pieces of his day. Therefore, we still do not simply account for a basic motion of nature which I call spix or the rotation or precession of an object's spin axis. This motion is most noticeable with a badly thrown football. The Earth has too little wobble at the N pole for us to bother with accounting for spix. A ball on an incline gets very little spix.

The speed, spin and spix of a charge have no effect on a charge's electrostatic force. If we increase a particle's spin or speed or decrease spix the particle's magnetic force is increased. Like charges with opposite spin and very little spix magnetically attract overcoming some or all of their mutual electrostatic repulsion. The acceleration of a charge in a gravity field decreases spix and increases magnetic force for a unified field theory. It is easier to change the spix of an electron than it's spin. With an isolated particle all we must change is inertia but in an atom we must also overcome electric and magnetic forces so only portions of a sine wave (quantal) affects captured particles. An isolated charge always spins.

Today we can't find names fast enough for newly discovered particles. This is because too many have accepted relativistic math as science. Beware, c is not a limit but is only a constant to the source.

For further details see flash!!! #7 in the 30 Nov. '76 The Tech. This ad was perfect, it had good layout, very accurate typesetting, etc. What a pleasure to get such speed and accuracy from The Tech staff. — by JW Ecklin

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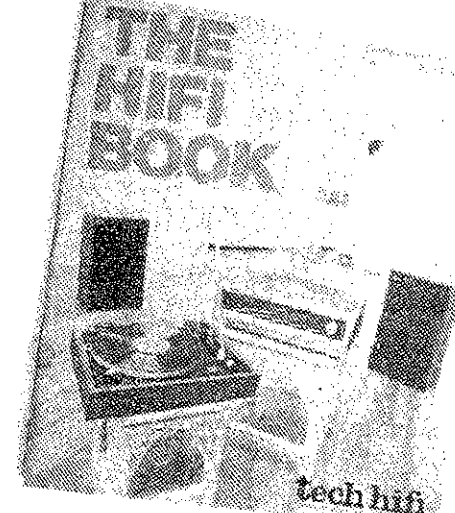
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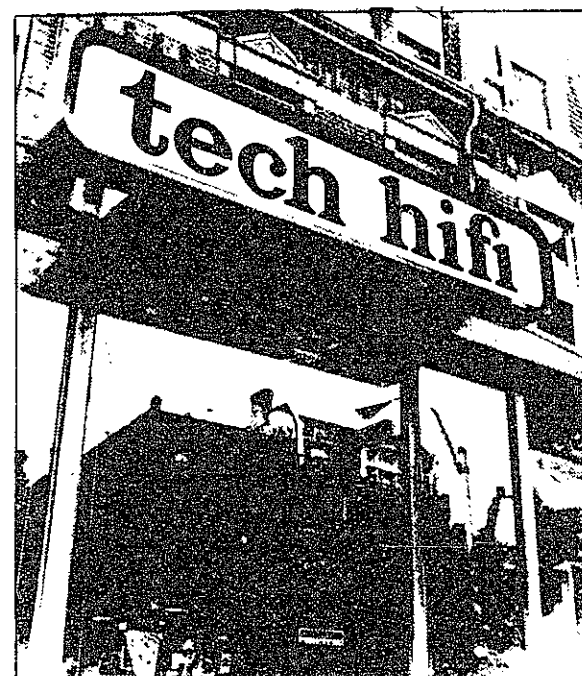
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See page 2.

